

TOP SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: March 15, 1952

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

SUBJECT: Southeast Asia

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. F. S. Tomlinson, Counselor, British Embassy
John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary of State

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Mr. Tomlinson called at his request to leave a memorandum (copy attached) concerning serious views taken by the United Kingdom Government about the situation in Indo-China with particular reference to the possible weakening of French determination to continue the fight as well as the possibility of overt Chinese Communist intervention. Mr. Tomlinson said that the Ambassador had been instructed to approach Secretary Acheson on this matter but that in view of his imminent departure from the city he had requested Mr. Tomlinson to bring the memorandum to me with the thought that when Sir Oliver returns, in about one week, the Secretary might be able to give him any preliminary views of the United States Government. Mr. Tomlinson said he was instructed to refer to the conversations between Secretary Acheson and Foreign Minister Eden in Lisbon, at which time the Secretary had stated that he hoped it would be possible to have tripartite talks on Southeast Asia, with particular reference to Indo-China, in about a month or six weeks time.

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TOP SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

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[REDACTED] In response to Mr. Tomlinson's request, I stated that I had heard rumors but that as far as I was aware the United States had no information which would confirm these reports.

According to the United Kingdom memorandum, the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff are urgently engaged in studying "(a) the effectiveness of retaliation against China aimed specifically at countering aggression in Indo-China and deterring similar aggression elsewhere (i.e. not at the much wider object of eliminating the Central People's Government); and (b) the possible Soviet reaction to retaliation so limited". The British expressed the hope that when the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff examination is completed it will provide material "for discussion of the problem with the United States authorities as a preparation for tripartite ministerial discussions".

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Mr. Tomlinson was informed that the United States Government was urgently studying the situation in Indo-China with the view to being prepared, as the Secretary had indicated, for tripartite discussions at an early date. It was not possible to say at this time just when these American studies would be over, but it was hoped that it would be comparatively shortly. Mr. Tomlinson was also informed that if it appeared during the course of the coming week that there was any more useful statement which could be made to him, he would be called in. In response to a specific question, Mr. Tomlinson was informed that while the American studies were directed primarily to the situation in Indo-China they nevertheless were also concerned with the general situation in all of Southeast Asia.

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Next 2 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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